

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 34/10/98

6 February 1998

Further information on EXTRA 101/97 (AMR 34/28/97, 15 July 1997) and follow-ups (AMR 34/34/97, 4 September 1997, AMR 34/38/97, 19 November 1997 and AMR 34/39/97, 20 November 1997) - Death Penalty

GUATEMALA Manuel Martínez Coronado

After a series of last minute appeals by his lawyer, all of them rejected, the execution of Manuel Martínez Coronado is now due to go ahead at 6am, (12:00 GMT) on 10 February 1998.

Martínez, an impoverished peasant from the eastern Guatemalan department of Chiquimula, was sentenced to death in October 1995 for the multiple homicide of seven members of a family to whom he was related and with whom he had been contesting a small plot of land. The land was sufficient to maintain the livelihood of only one of the families.

Amnesty International is concerned that the proceedings which led to his conviction fell short of acceptable standards of due process. Guatemala has not responded to requests from the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, (IACHR), to suspend the execution of the condemned man until it has had time to examine the proceedings in his case and determine if they met the human rights protection standards set by the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights. This is the second occasion the Commission's request for such measures has been ignored by the Guatemalan authorities.

If his execution goes ahead, Manuel Martínez will be the first Guatemalan to die by lethal injection - a method the Guatemalan authorities repeatedly claim is speedier and more humane than any other form of execution.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/E-mails/express/airmail letters in Spanish or in your own language:

- recognizing the serious nature of the crime for which Manuel Martínez Coronado was convicted, but reiterating Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty in all cases, as the ultimate, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- noting that certain aspects of his trial did not appear to meet standards of due process as established in the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights;
- regretting Guatemala's failure to respond to the request of the IACHR that the execution be suspended until it has had time to determine whether the Inter-American convention has been breached, and that this lack of response from Guatemala weakens the Inter-American system of human rights protection;
- pointing out that Guatemala is out of step with abolitionist tendencies throughout the world and with Latin America's traditional and much-admired long-term stance against the death penalty;
- pointing out that medical research in the USA has shown that death by lethal injection can be prolonged and painful and that the participation of doctors or other medical personnel would be contrary to the position taken by the World Medical Association against the participation of doctors in any form of execution, at any stage;
- stressing that all available research indicates that the death penalty does not serve as a deterrent to crime.

APPEALS TO:President

S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen
 Presidente de la República de Guatemala
 Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1
 Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Presidente, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

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E-mails: <alvaroarzu@guate.net>

Salutation: Sr. Presidente / Dear President

Procurator General

Lic. Acisclo Valladares Molina
 Procurador General de la Nación, Procuraduría General de la Nación
 15 Avenida 9-69, Zona 13, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Telegrams: Procurador General, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Faxes: + 502 334 8465

Salutation: Sr. Procurador / Dear Procurator General

Vice-Minister of the Interior

Sr. Salvador Gándara
 Viceministro de Gobernación, Ministerio de Gobernación
 Despacho Ministerial, Of. N° 8, Palacio Nacional
 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

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Faxes: + 502 251 5368

Salutation: Sr. Viceministro / Dear Vice-Minister

COPIES TO:President of the Guatemalan Medical Association

Colegio de Médicos y Cirujanos de Guatemala
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 Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

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Judge Juan Fernando Godínez

Juzgado 1º de Ejecución Penal, Torre de Tribunales, 7 Av 21 C, Zona 1, Centro Cívico, Ciudad de Guatemala, GUATEMALA

Note: Juan Fernández Godínez has been named as the judge who will preside over Manuel Martínez' execution, despite the fact that he has been quoted as saying that he is a life-long opponent of the death penalty and does not believe it will solve Guatemala's crime problems.

Lawyer

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and to diplomatic representatives of Guatemala accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 March 1998.